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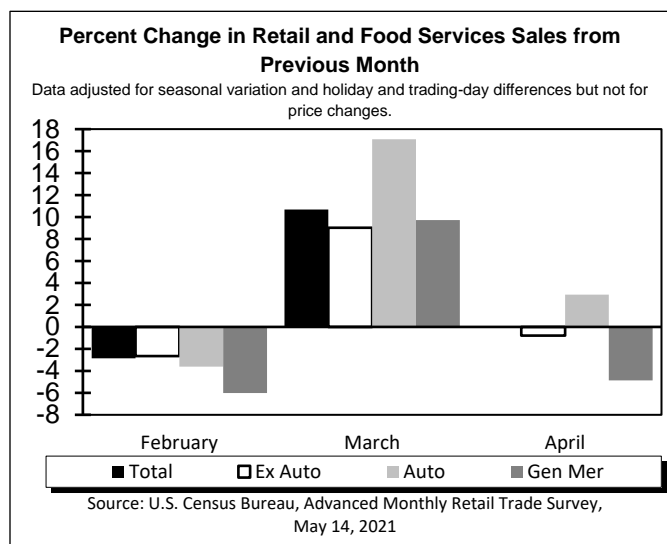
ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICES, APRIL 2021

Release Number: CB21-69

Statement Regarding COVID-19 Impact: The Census Bureau continues to monitor response and data quality and has determined that estimates in this release meet publication standards. For more information, see [COVID-19 FAQs](#).

May 14, 2021 — The U.S. Census Bureau announced the following advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for April 2021:

ADVANCE MONTHLY SALES		
April 2021	\$619.9 billion	0.0%*
March 2021 (revised)	\$619.8 billion	10.7%
Next release: June 15, 2021		
* The 90 percent confidence interval includes zero. There is insufficient statistical evidence to conclude that the actual change is different from zero. Data adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences but not for price changes. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Advanced Monthly Retail Trade Survey, May 14, 2021		



Advance Estimates of U.S. Retail and Food Services

Advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for April 2021, adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, were \$619.9 billion, virtually unchanged (± 0.5 percent)* from the previous month, and 51.2 percent (± 0.7 percent) above April 2020. Total sales for the February 2021 through April 2021 period were up 27.1 percent (± 0.5 percent) from the same period a year ago. The February 2021 to March 2021 percent change was revised from up 9.7 percent (± 0.5 percent) to up 10.7 percent (± 0.3 percent).

Retail trade sales were down 0.3 percent (± 0.5 percent)* from March 2021, but up 46.1 percent (± 0.7 percent) above last year. Clothing and clothing accessories stores were up 726.8 percent (± 2.8 percent) from April 2020, while food services and drinking places were up 116.8 percent (± 3.0 percent) from last year.

General Information

The May 2021 Advance Monthly Retail report is scheduled for release on June 15, 2021 at 8:30 a.m. EDT.

Data Inquiries

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View the full schedule in the Economic Briefing Room: <www.census.gov/economic-indicators/>. The full text and tables of this release can be found at <www.census.gov/retail/>.

Notice of Revision: Monthly retail sales estimates were revised on April 26, 2021 based on the results of the 2019 Annual Retail Trade Survey and Service Annual Survey and the results of the 2017 Economic Census. The Annual Revision of Monthly Retail and Food Services showing revised estimates can be found on our website at <<https://www.census.gov/retail/mrts/www/benchmark/2021/html/annrev21.html>>.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

The advance estimates are based on a subsample of the Census Bureau's full retail and food services sample. A stratified random sampling method is used to select approximately 5,500 retail and food services firms whose sales are then weighted and benchmarked to represent the complete universe of over three million retail and food services firms.

Survey Description

The U.S. Census Bureau conducts the Advance Monthly Retail Trade and Food Services Survey to provide an early estimate of monthly sales by kind of business for retail and food service firms located in the United States. Each month, questionnaires are mailed to a probability sample of approximately 5,500 employer firms selected from the larger Monthly Retail Trade Survey. Advance sales estimates are computed using a link relative estimator. For each detailed industry, we compute a ratio of current-to-previous month weighted sales using data from units for which we have obtained usable responses for both the current and previous month. For each detailed industry, the advance total sales estimates for the current month is computed by multiplying this ratio by the preliminary sales estimate for the previous month (derived from the larger MRTS) at the appropriate industry level. Total estimates for broader industries are computed as the sum of the detailed industry estimates. The link relative estimate is used because imputation is not performed for most nonrespondents in MARTS. For a limited number of nonresponding companies that have influential effects on the estimates, sales may be estimated based on historical performance of that company. The monthly estimates are benchmarked to the annual survey estimates from the Annual Retail Trade Survey once available. The estimates are adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading day differences. Additional information on MARTS and MRTS can be found on the Census Bureau website at: <www.census.gov/retail/>.

Reliability of Estimates

Because the estimates presented in this report are based on a sample survey, they contain sampling error and nonsampling error.

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Sampling error is the difference between the estimate and the result that would be obtained from a complete enumeration of the sampling frame conducted under the same survey conditions. This error occurs because only a subset of the entire sampling frame is measured in a sample survey. Standard errors and coefficients of variation (CV), as given in Table 3 of this report, are estimated measures of sampling variation.

The margin of sampling error, as used on page 1, gives a range about the estimate which is a 90 percent confidence interval. If, for example, the percent change estimate is +1.2 percent and its estimated standard error is 0.9 percent, then the margin of sampling error is $\pm 1.753 \times 0.9$ percent or ± 1.6 percent, and the 90 percent confidence interval is -0.4 percent to +2.8 percent. If the interval contains 0, then one does not have sufficient evidence to conclude at the 90 percent confidence level that the change is different from zero and therefore the change is not statistically significant. Estimated changes shown in the text are statistically significant unless otherwise noted. For a monthly total, the median estimated coefficient of variation is given. The resulting confidence interval is the estimated value $\pm 1.753 \times CV \times$ (the estimated monthly total). The Census Bureau recommends that individuals using estimates in this report incorporate this information into their analyses, as sampling error could affect the conclusions drawn from the estimates.

Nonsampling error encompasses all other factors that contribute to the total error of a sample survey estimate. This type of error can occur because of nonresponse, insufficient coverage of the universe of retail businesses, mistakes in the recording and coding of data, and other errors of collection, response, coverage, or processing. Although nonsampling error is not measured directly, the Census Bureau employs quality control procedures throughout the process to minimize this type of error.

Weather Information

For information on the impact of weather events on the compilation of this report, please see the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on our website at:
<www.census.gov/retail/marts_weather_faqs.html>

RESOURCES

The Rest of the Consumer Spending Story

Retail and services together represent what's commonly referred to as consumer spending. Quarterly Services Survey (QSS) revenue comprises roughly 2/3 of the personal consumption expenditures component of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) measured by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). The first quarter 2021 Advance Quarterly Services Report will be available on May 20, 2021 at 10:00 AM.

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Learn about historical revenue trends for certain industries going back 15 years and other data, such as in-patient days and discharges for hospitals, by visiting <<https://www.census.gov/services/index.html>>

API

The Census Bureau's application programming interface lets developers create custom apps to reach new users and makes key demographic, socio-economic and housing statistics more accessible than ever before. <www.census.gov/developers/>

FRED Mobile App



Receive the latest updates on the nation's key economic indicators by downloading the FRED App <<https://fred.stlouisfed.org/fred-mobile/>> for both Apple and Android devices. FRED, the signature database of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, now incorporates the Census Bureau's 13 economic indicators.

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Table 1. Estimated Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services, by Kind of Business

(Total sales estimates are shown in millions of dollars and are based on data from the Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, Monthly Retail Trade Survey, and administrative records.)

NAICS ¹ code	Kind of Business	Not Adjusted						Adjusted ²					
		4 Month Total		2021			2020		2021			2020	
		2021	% Chg. 2020	Apr. ³ (a)	Mar. (p)	Feb. (r)	Apr.	Mar.	Apr. ³ (a)	Mar. (p)	Feb. (r)	Apr. (r)	Mar. (r)
	Retail & food services,												
	total	2,254,403	22.2	616,697	629,941	490,646	407,227	478,267	619,923	619,787	559,970	409,942	480,407
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts) ...	1,758,303	17.1	474,505	483,084	387,850	337,693	395,880	480,438	484,286	444,228	341,744	402,361
	Total (excl. gasoline stations)	2,086,961	22.3	569,128	583,577	454,351	380,417	444,006	573,918	573,283	517,767	383,811	445,730
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts & gasoline stations)	1,590,861	16.7	426,936	436,720	351,555	310,883	361,619	434,433	437,782	402,025	315,613	367,684
	Retail	2,020,172	23.0	550,722	565,069	440,019	377,210	430,527	555,051	556,804	504,458	380,015	434,281
	GAFO⁴	(*)	(*)	(*)	124,020	95,043	68,637	95,501	(*)	126,849	111,754	72,227	99,040
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	496,100	44.6	142,192	146,857	102,796	69,534	82,387	139,485	135,501	115,742	68,198	78,046
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers .	460,944	46.9	132,379	136,751	95,277	62,554	74,904	129,911	126,038	107,294	61,388	70,865
44111	New car dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	107,396	77,194	50,131	59,487	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4413	Auto parts, acc. & tire stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	10,106	7,519	6,980	7,483	(*)	9,463	8,448	6,810	7,181
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	45,150	45.3	11,900	12,540	10,003	3,977	8,159	12,319	12,404	11,471	4,156	8,225
4421	Furniture stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	7,151	5,675	2,004	4,499	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4422	Home furnishings stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	(S)	(S)	1,973	3,660	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
443	Electronics & appliance stores	28,532	26.1	7,292	7,971	6,203	3,040	5,816	8,430	8,329	7,089	3,527	6,135
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers.....	152,185	25.5	47,750	43,601	29,605	35,916	32,152	43,204	43,374	38,082	32,293	32,810
4441	Building mat. & sup. dealers	(*)	(*)	(*)	37,463	25,637	30,023	27,984	(*)	37,918	32,784	27,902	28,969
445	Food & beverage stores.....	281,402	1.0	71,283	72,574	65,819	71,064	80,990	73,147	72,877	72,343	72,057	82,743
4451	Grocery stores	251,955	-0.4	63,494	64,658	59,018	64,383	73,901	64,922	64,529	64,290	65,033	75,026
4453	Beer, wine & liquor stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	5,730	4,968	4,938	5,249	(*)	6,115	5,907	5,281	5,730
446	Health & personal care stores	122,199	7.8	32,051	33,145	27,494	25,724	30,888	32,375	32,055	29,691	25,958	30,492
44611	Pharmacies & drug stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	27,984	23,466	23,910	26,974	(*)	27,090	24,805	23,838	26,786
447	Gasoline stations	167,442	21.6	47,569	46,364	36,295	26,810	34,261	46,005	46,504	42,203	26,131	34,677
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	78,585	57.7	22,262	24,015	16,568	2,744	10,969	23,497	24,759	20,180	2,842	11,494
44811	Men's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	559	362	86	302	(*)	577	460	77	319
44812	Women's clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,149	2,069	469	1,493	(*)	2,991	2,586	454	1,458
44814	Family clothing stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	9,249	5,919	688	4,259	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)
4482	Shoe stores	(*)	(*)	(*)	3,802	2,163	462	1,686	(*)	3,563	2,512	453	1,616
451	Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores	32,320	59.4	8,884	9,591	6,424	3,484	5,287	9,615	9,970	8,030	3,771	5,642
452	General merchandise stores.....	243,625	7.8	62,017	67,782	54,183	54,576	63,624	65,674	69,026	62,909	57,044	65,710
4521	Department stores	36,639	15.8	9,760	10,671	7,881	5,941	8,158	10,929	11,146	9,900	6,334	8,939
4529	Other general merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	57,111	46,302	48,635	55,466	(*)	57,880	53,009	50,710	56,771
45291	Warehouse clubs & supercenters.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	49,063	39,956	41,322	47,739	(*)	49,709	45,664	43,360	48,813
45299	All oth. gen. merch. stores.....	(*)	(*)	(*)	8,048	6,346	7,313	7,727	(*)	8,171	7,345	7,350	7,958
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	49,037	30.4	13,715	13,632	10,515	7,319	9,580	13,579	13,736	12,394	7,394	9,874
454	Nonstore retailers	323,595	24.2	83,807	86,997	74,114	73,022	66,414	87,721	88,269	84,324	76,644	68,433
4541	Elect. shopping & m/o houses	(*)	(*)	(*)	77,377	65,004	67,339	58,622	(*)	79,606	75,939	70,809	61,256
722	Food services & drinking places	234,231	15.8	65,975	64,872	50,627	30,017	47,740	64,872	62,983	55,512	29,927	46,126

(*) Advance estimates are not available for this kind of business.

(NA) Not available (a) Advance estimate (p) Preliminary estimate (r) Revised estimate

(S) Estimate does not meet publication standards because of high sampling variability (coefficient of variation is greater than 30%), poor response quality (total quantity response rate is less than 50%), or other concerns about the estimate's quality.

(1) For a full description of the NAICS codes used in this table, see <https://www.census.gov/naics/>

(2) Estimates are concurrently adjusted for seasonal variation and for holiday and trading day differences, but not for price changes. Concurrent seasonal adjustment uses all available unadjusted estimates as input to the X-13ARIMA-SEATS program. The factors derived from the program are used in calculating all seasonally adjusted estimates shown in this table. Year-to-date seasonally adjusted sales estimates are not tabulated. Adjustment factors and explanatory material can be found on the Internet at <http://www.census.gov/retail>

(3) Advance estimates are based on early reports obtained from a small sample of firms selected from the larger Monthly Retail Trade Survey (MRTS) sample. All other estimates are from the MRTS sample.

(4) GAFO represents firms which specialize in department store types of merchandise and is comprised of furniture & home furnishings (442), electronics & appliances (443), clothing & accessories (448), sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, and book (451), general merchandise (452), office supply, stationery, and gift stores (4532).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, May 14, 2021. Table 3 provides estimated measures of sampling variability. Additional information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions may be found at www.census.gov/retail/how_surveys_are_collected.html.

Table 2. Estimated Change in Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services, by Kind of Business

(Estimates are shown as percents and are based on data from the Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, Monthly Retail Trade Survey, and administrative records.)

NAICS code	Kind of Business	Percent Change ¹					
		Apr. 2021 Advance from --		Mar. 2021 Preliminary from --		Feb. 2021 through Apr. 2021 from --	
		Mar. 2021 (p)	Apr. 2020 (r)	Feb. 2021 (r)	Mar. 2020 (r)	Nov. 2020 through Jan. 2021	Feb. 2020 through Apr. 2020
	Retail & food services,						
	total	0.0	51.2	10.7	29.0	8.7	27.1
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts)	-0.8	40.6	9.0	20.4	7.7	21.0
	Total (excl. gasoline stations)	0.1	49.5	10.7	28.6	8.2	26.7
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts & gasoline stations)	-0.8	37.6	8.9	19.1	6.9	20.0
	Retail	-0.3	46.1	10.4	28.2	8.2	26.9
441	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	2.9	104.5	17.1	73.6	12.7	55.2
4411, 4412	Auto & other motor veh. dealers ...	3.1	111.6	17.5	77.9	13.0	58.0
442	Furniture & home furn. stores	-0.7	196.4	8.1	50.8	8.3	58.5
443	Electronics & appliance stores	1.2	139.0	17.5	35.8	14.5	39.9
444	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers.....	-0.4	33.8	13.9	32.2	9.3	27.2
445	Food & beverage stores.....	0.4	1.5	0.7	-11.9	1.0	-0.8
4451	Grocery stores	0.6	-0.2	0.4	-14.0	0.5	-2.4
446	Health & personal care stores	1.0	24.7	8.0	5.1	4.9	10.1
447	Gasoline stations	-1.1	76.1	10.2	34.1	15.7	31.5
448	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	-5.1	726.8	22.7	115.4	12.1	85.5
451	Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores	-3.6	155.0	24.2	76.7	14.1	70.7
452	General merchandise stores.....	-4.9	15.1	9.7	5.0	4.2	7.7
4521	Department stores	-1.9	72.5	12.6	24.7	10.1	21.9
453	Miscellaneous store retailers	-1.1	83.6	10.8	39.1	6.1	37.1
454	Nonstore retailers	-0.6	14.5	4.7	29.0	6.8	23.6
722	Food services & drinking places	3.0	116.8	13.5	36.5	13.6	28.9

(p) Preliminary estimate (r) Revised estimate

(1) Estimates shown in this table are derived from adjusted estimates provided in Table 1 of this report.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, May 14, 2021. Table 3 provides estimated measures of sampling variability.

Additional information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions may be found at <www.census.gov/retail/how_surveys_are_collected.html>.

Table 3. Estimated Measures of Sampling Variability and Revision to Advance Estimates Apr. 2021

(Estimates are shown as percents and are based on data from the Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey and Monthly Retail Trade Survey)

NAICS Code	Kind of Business	Median CV ⁽¹⁾ for Current Mo. (%)	Median standard error ⁽¹⁾ for Percent change			Revision for month-to-month change ⁽²⁾	
			Previous Mo. to Current Mo.	Previous Qtr. to Current Qtr.	Current Mo. to same Mo. Last Yr.	Average revision	Median absolute revision
441 4411, 4412 442 443 444 445 4451 446 447 448 451 452 4521 453 454 722	Retail & food services,						
	total	0.8	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.3
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts)	0.9	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.4
	Total (excl. gasoline stations)	0.8	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.3	0.4
	Total (excl. motor vehicle & parts & gasoline stations)	0.9	0.3	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.4
	Retail, total	0.7	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.4
	Motor vehicle & parts dealers	1.5	0.8	0.7	1.3	0.9	0.7
	Auto & other motor veh. dealers	1.5	0.9	0.7	1.3	1.0	0.6
	Furniture & home furn. stores.....	3.0	1.0	0.8	1.7	-0.3	1.0
	Electronics & appliance stores	1.7	0.8	0.7	1.3	-1.6	2.0
	Building material & garden eq. & supplies dealers.....	1.8	0.8	0.6	1.3	0.2	0.7
	Food & beverage stores.....	0.7	0.2	0.2	0.7	-0.1	0.2
	Grocery stores	0.7	0.2	0.2	0.7	-0.1	0.2
	Health & personal care stores	2.7	0.7	0.6	1.3	0.6	0.9
	Gasoline stations	1.3	0.5	0.4	0.9	0.0	0.5
	Clothing & clothing accessories stores	3.1	1.1	1.1	1.6	-1.4	2.5
	Sporting goods, hobby, musical instrument, & book stores	2.9	0.8	1.0	2.3	-0.3	1.1
	General merchandise stores.....	1.0	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.5
	Department stores	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.3	0.3
	Miscellaneous store retailers	5.0	3.7	1.8	5.1	1.0	1.5
	Nonstore retailers	1.6	0.4	0.4	1.0	-0.1	1.6
	Food services & drinking places	3.5	1.0	0.7	1.7	1.0	0.4

(1) Estimated measures of sampling variability are based on estimates not adjusted for seasonal variation or holiday or trading day variation. Medians are based on estimates for the most recent 12 months.

(2) These columns provide measures of the difference between the advance-to-preliminary and preliminary-to-final estimates of month-to-month change for the same pair of months as measured by the Advance sample and MRTS sample. The average and median revisions are based on estimates for the most recent 12 months.

 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Advance Monthly Retail Trade Survey, May 14, 2021. Additional information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, sample design, and definitions may be found at <www.census.gov/retail/how_surveys_are_collected.html>.